HOLLOW MOUNTAIN IN MONTANA.

It Contains Unexplored Mammoth Caves Supposed to be One Thousand Feet in Depth—A Gruesome Place for Visitors.

Fourteen miles west of Anaconda, deep down in that high hill known as George mountain, is a reproduction of the Mammoth Cave of Kentucky, says the Anaconda, Mont., Standard. It is a series of chambers in the limestone formation, and its total depth must be somewhere between 700 and 1,000 feet.

Never has the cave been explored thoroughly and satisfactorily. Never has been surveyed. Several hundred people have visited it, but the fact of its existence is known to a large portion of the population of the State.

Within its walled chambers are all the beauties of the great Kentucky cave. Stalactites and stalagmites hang from the roof and line the sides of the cave in quaint and fantastic forms. Upon them the flickering rays of a candle flame makes weird light and shadow effects. Far down at the bottom is a dainty little subterranean lake.

So sharp is the descent from chamber to chamber and so narrow are the passage-ways connecting them that a trip through the cave is most difficult of accomplishment. A good equipment of stout ropes is essential, together with an ample supply of candles and matches.

YOU ENTER AT THE TOP.

The only entrance to the cave, so far as known, is at the top, where a prospector, in picking a shaft, suddenly drove his pick through the ceiling of the first huge, dome-shaped chamber and discovered the cave. Undoubtedly there is another entrance. Even in the lowest depths of the cave the air at all times is pure and is in motion constantly.

When one of the first parties went down to explore the big hole the adventurous explorer found in a small, long, winding chamber off the first big one the bones of a mountain lion. They lay beside a little pond formed by the constant dripping of moisture from the roof. How came the lion there is yet an unsolved problem. Whence did the animal enter? Its bones shewed that death had taken place many years before the cave was discovered. Perhaps the animal fell through a tree grown crevice, and, being unable to climb out, wandered about in the darkness until it found the little pond and lay down there to die.

It is a grewsome place to explore. Coming out of the sun of a summer day into the Egyptian darkness of the giant hole, unlit by a solitary, tiny ray of light from the outside, with the constant drip of ceiling and walls soaking through one's garments and with the mud and slime of the passageways through which one must crawl and wriggle clinging to his skin, the explorer quickly loses interest in the cave or perhaps is overcome by a chill. To go well prepared, however, lessens the difficulties of the journey.

One drives from Anaconda westward to Oleson gulch in going to the cave. There he turns to the right and follows the road four miles, up beyond the old, unused concentrator of the Silver Chain mine, until he reaches a little log farmhouse, which tells him it is time to begin the steep, sharp ascent. Years ago, when the George mine was in operation on the mountain, the road was built, and this is the one that is taken. First it rises to the east, just clinging to the hill, and then by a series of sharp ascents mounts upwards and turns west. There comes a brief stretch of comparatively level ground and then a long and steep and sickening climb up the narrow trail with the almost sheer, bare mountain side stretching hundreds of feet below.

ANACONDA IN THE DISTANCE.

A turn at a point of rocks and one sees below him the valley of Warm Springs and spreading away to the east with Anaconda a tiny, toy town in the distance.

On and up one goes until at lengthit he reaches the grove that covers the top of the hill, 1,800 feet above the level from which the start was made. A broad and beautiful grove is this. The trees are sturdy and spreading and the ground covered by a beautiful carpet of grass upon which wild flowers make glorious splashes of color. The vivid crimson of the paint pots, the dainty coloring of larkspurs, with the quieter tints of the hundreds of other blossoms, make the spot like a wonderful hothouse. Almost tropical in the luxuriance of the vegetation, and yet in winter the snows climb seventeen and eighteen feet up the trees and leave the top boughs sticking out like odd shaped shrubs.

Almost hid away in the grove one finds the comfortable cabin of Alcide Dumouchel, a prospector, who has lived on the hill for fourteen years. With the faith characteristic of his occupation he believes implicitly in the richness of his ledges and his own ultimate wealth.

Follow the road on beyond the cabin and the miner's shaft house and then descend an easy grade for half a mile to the little spring where one camps, just beyond the grove. On one side of this hill lies the head of Lost Creek canyon and on the other the slopes that lead down to Oleson gulch. The hill is the divide.

Leaving camp one goes toward the Lost creek side, walks for half a mile and then begins to search among the trees and dead, whiteened, fallen limbs for the entrance to the cave. It is hard to find, for a little mound of earth, thrown out from the prospect hole, and a bare location notice board are the only marks.

THE FIRST VENTURE IN.

At length it is found. It is a trench such as prospectors make and at one end one sees where the pick, after the soil had been cut through, had broken away the limestone. The hole has been enlarged until it is an arch of jagged rock, leading into a little dark chamber. Down you go carefully and slowly—for a slip would be dangerous, and once in the little chamber you see at its side another and smaller hole, beyond which is darkness profound. As you crouch beside it you hear the hollow sound of water dripping from a height far away and below.

Across the hole is a log from which a rope leads into the hole and down a sharp slope, the end of which cannot be seen. Put your candle and matches in your pocket, put your feet down the hole, grasp the rope and, lying on your stomach let yourself slip down a few feet. Presently your feet pass over an edge. You cling to the rope all the tighter and take a sharp breath. Grope about with your feet and touch a bit of wood. It is one of the steps of a rude ladder of which supports are unhewn saplings.

Then reach for the second round. It is ticklish work, but compared to what you later will encounter, it is easy.

DOWN A TREACHEROUS LADDER.

After this you let go of the rope and begin to climb down. As you grasp the ladder mud and slime ooze between your fingers, and the dampness of the waterlogged old wood chills you to the marrow. A stone or two you have disturbed in the slide to the ladder whizz past your head and fall with a loud, hollow thud far, far below and rattle and dash on for a full minute.

On and on, down into the blackness you go. The ladder sways and sags under your weight. It is only forty feet long, but it seems miles. You reach the bottom and step upon a slippery, shelving rock. Go carefully, for off to your left is a sudden drop off into a pit 150 feet deep.

Light your candle and hold it aloft. You find you are standing upon a bench in the wall. On you go to the floor, if floor that boulder strewn, irregular, hilly place can be called a floor. This chamber is fully 300 feet long, and in its widest place fully 50 feet. Its general course is downward, so that the lower end is probably 75 feet below the place upon which you stand.

Then step aside, if some one is coming after you, for he will dislodge stones as he comes through the hole far up there in the ceiling and they will fall with fearful force. Your light, reduced by the darkness and distance, until it seems but a mere speck to him, is making him nervous if he is looking at it.

AND STILL FARTHER DOWN.

"My," you will hear him say to himself, "it's a million feet down there." They all say it. Somehow or other the first man's light always gives the second man an exaggerated idea of the length of the drop.

The first big chamber is beautiful, chiefly because of its size. Selfish visitors have broken off the more unique stalactites and stalagmites and carried them away. The shape of the chamber is irregular and its walls seem a piled-up mass of boulders.

In moving away from the foot of the ladder beware of the drop off to the left. That lower chamber goes on and enters one lower down in the main chain of chambers.

The second chamber is not so large as the first, but richer in beauty. Upon one wall is a bench of white lime upon which the stalagmites rise like pillars, giving the place the appearance of an altar.

In passing to the third chamber one has to scramble up over the boulders to a point near the top, which here is low. Each spring some of the roof falls in, hence the boulder-strewn passage way and the low roof. Perhaps under the boulders, the openings to other caves are concealed.

Another narrow hole in the wall is encountered through which one must slide feet first and reach for a ladder with his toes. This ladder is less than twenty-five feet long, so it isn't so bad. It is cold and clammy and the awful silence and darkness is wearing upon you, but the descent seems easy after that first long ladder.

Then you go on and on for hours, the general course being downward. Passages frequently are mere crevices, through which you squeeze with the comforting thought that perhaps you will drop off into a hole a hundred or so feet deep on the other side.

Very much alike are these chambers except that some are harder to get in and out of than others. At length you come, after a climb over rocks and stalactites, to the star place of all. If you are at all inclined to fleshiness you stop here. If you are slender, unincumbered and a good wiggler, go ahead.

This particular hole is about as big around as a man's body. Two slimy, muddy, slippery ropes, fastened to a log, lead into it. Assume your old attitude by prostrating yourself, and start through the hole, bidding your feet good-bye before they begin their adventurous exploration. In about a yard the passage bends almost at right angles to its first direction and when your feet have passed the bend they stick out into thick, black nothing.

The walls of the chamber into which you are going come together in V shape, the point being the exit of the hole through which you are wiggling. Along a ledge on one wall, or arm of the V, you must crawl until you reach a point wide enough between the walls to allow your body to drop over. The rope, of course, dropped over at the apex of the V, but you have brought the slack with you and hung it over a convenient stalactite so as to have a sheer drop into the unknown depths below.

RIGHT OVER THE EDGE.

Lower yourself gently over the edge, winding a leg around the rope as you do so, and then drop away. If you do not hold fast you will do a slide beside which the slide of life in a circus is a journey of delight. Your drop would terminate on a big, shiny, smooth slab of limestone, which could give you a swift and exciting descent into a little lake, the waters of which are about as cold as anything can be and not be frozen.

But don't let your hands and legs slip on the slimy rope and you are all right. Of course you cannot very well carry a lighted candle with you while going down and so the dark descent has all the uncertainty of a trip blindfolded. The sensation closely approaches that experienced when, in a nightmare, you are bound hand and foot and someone is pushing you over the edge of a precipice.

The rope is about 20 feet long. It seems longer, but it is not. Going up, one would be willing to swear it was 50.

When your candle is lighted at the end of the descent you find yourself in by far the most beautiful chamber of the whole chain. First step down from your shelving rock and around the edge of the lake and then give yourself up to admiration. The glistening white walls, pillared and carved by nature in odd designs, rise up to a noble, dome-shaped roof. Against one wall and fed by trickling drops from the rocks, is the limpid lake, clear with marvelous transparency. No water in the world above is so clear. Only 15 feet wide is this little body of water, but it is a gem of beauty.

WITHIN A NATURAL DAM.

A natural dam holds the lake within bounds, but the cave continues to slope away sharply. Another good-sized chamber, perhaps 200 feet long, is beyond the chamber of the lake, and has a descent from there of 40 to 50 feet, but it offers no new spectacles. It is interesting chiefly because there are many tiny openings in the walls through which fresh air sucks. Perhaps here may be found some time an entrance to the outer world.

When one starts on the return trip the wisdom of bringing his own ropes is apparent. If he had not so armed himself he may have the experience of the two Standard men who went through the cave last July without ropes. In the chamber of the lake they had paused to use the huge apartment as a photographic dark room and to change plates. The artist, very naturally and properly, got a chill. So he went up the slippery rope first, the other man steadying the rope from below. Then the photographic material was hauled up laboriously and the man below began the ascent. At that moment his chill arrived, a little off schedule time, but vigorous for all that.

The rope swayed and swung out over the lake and the climber's fingers grew colder and slimier and number as he tried to make progress. When his hands were about a foot below the ledge they gave out. The rope was as if soaked in oil and grease, so slippery was it. To drop back was dangerous. He held by his legs and meditated.

The artist poked himself through the hole above, hanging by his toes, and threw a loop of slender rope—used in carrying photographic material—down. With this about his shoulders the chilly man, who felt like a monkey on a very unsteady stick, rested until the chill consented to retire. Then he pulled himself over the ledge, got into the hole, lay there and panted.

When the two at length emerged from the cave they found kindly Mr. Dumouchel just preparing to start down after them. From one of his claims a mile or so distant he had seen them go to the cave. Alarmed by their four-hours' stay below he had started to their rescue.

THE STORY ABOUT IT.

That evening, in his own snug little cabin, he told them what he knew about the cave.

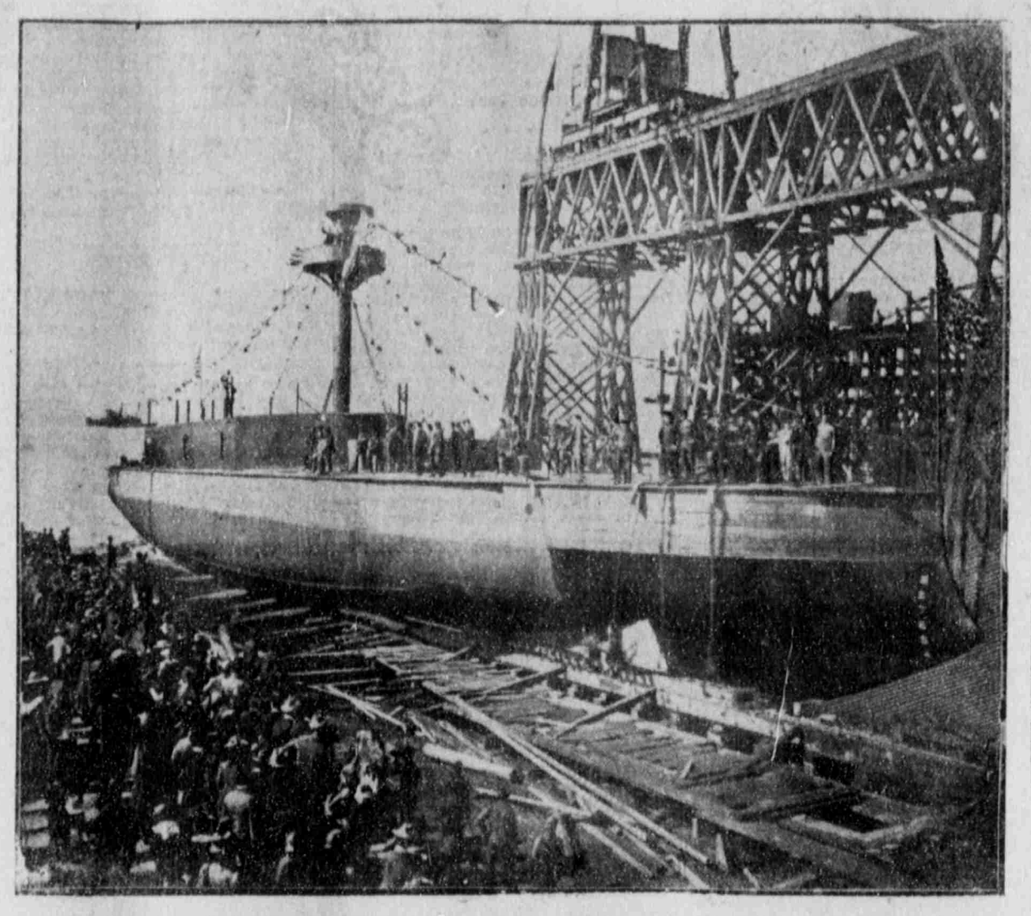
"It was discovered in 1887," said he, "by a prospector named Henry Mearshan, who, while sinking a prospect hole, broke through the roof of the first chamber. At the time he was working with a partner named Dunn. He made no attempt to locate the cave.

"In 1894 Charles Brown, another prospector, located the cave as a mineral claim and, for his assessment work, put in the ladders you found there. Brown, however, did not keep up his work, so I relocated the cave last year as part of the Bertha claim and still hold it.

"George Darling, formerly of the George mine, made an extended tour of the cave some years ago and it was he who discovered the lake. A complete exploration has never yet been made. So far as I am able to judge a survey would locate the lower chambers not far from the surface of the slope above Lost creek. Some time I may have such a survey made and open up the cave to the public, first putting in proper ladders, and widening the passage between the chambers."

MAGNIFICENT AND POWERFUL NEW MONITOR.

The Arkansas Just Launched at Newport News. Now Being Fitted With Big Engines.



One of the finest fighting craft afloat will be the new United States monitor Arkansas, now receiving its final equipment, when completed. Our special staff photographer has caught a striking snapshot of the handsome war vessel, just as it is sliding off the stocks for the first glad plunge into the Atlantic.

CORRUPTION FUNDS AND THEIR USES.

[Ambrose Bierce, in Denver Post.]

I think I can understand and feel some sympathy with the indignation of the man who points out the corrupt use of money to defeat his political party. It is a righteous indignation. True, the man does not commonly know anything about what he points out unless he has himself taken some of the money.

Men who use money corruptly are rogues, but, as a rule, not fools, except in the general sense that all rogues are fools, for no folly is greater than that of dishonesty. Indubitably the rascal who tries to "carry an election" by the illegitimate use of money is a dunce of magnitude, but indubitably his stupidity does not find expression in taking into his confidence anybody but the persons who get the money. And these do not tell. How, then, excepting in rare instances of planned exposure or confession under pressure do the others know about it? They do not; they merely suspect. Almost all the talk of "bribery," the purchase of votes, and so forth, has no foundation in known fact. I do not say that the fact does not exist; only that its existence is seldom known to the accuser, who, if required to make good his accusation—as he might be if he had not the prudence to be rather vague—would be missed for a season from his customary environment.

The corrupt use of money to "carry an election" is a thing easy to affirm; it is one of the cheapest and handiest arguments against the opposing party.

Anybody can use it; no thought, no knowledge, no mental ability is required. It is as serviceable to the political peasant as to the scholar and statesman. Like bad language and those ugly nicknames which have no special personal appropriateness, it is free to all, and, like them, has the merit of a general applicability which fits it for as effective use against the managers of one political party as those of another. It is a dead cat that any hand can fling into any crowd.

I say I can understand and sympathize with the indignation of a man making that accusation—if he is sincere. What I do not understand is his amazing choice of a political party upon which to empty the vials of his wrath; he is always "mad" at the wrong one. If he will have the goodness to loan me his attention I will try to make this as clear to him as the use of some words of more than one syllable will permit.

Let me be frank. The advantage of these remarks, if they have any, will necessarily accrue to the Republican party. That party has the most money, therefore, probably, the largest "campaign fund."

That this fund is as great, or nearly as great, or a tenth part as great as the Democratic writers and speakers say it is, there is no reason whatever to suppose. These gentlemen have access to all the resources of arithmetic to assist them in stating its amount and to none of the books which might enable them to state it correctly if they wanted to; and they are in no apprehension of disproof. Under these circumstances it would be strange, indeed, if they did not permit imagination to fly with a free and joyous wing. Nor are they in possession of any proof whatever that the money is used, or is to be used, more corruptly than the campaign fund of their own party. That is an assumption based upon what they conceive to be the low morality of those whom they believe to contribute most of the money and those whom they know to handle it.

For the purpose of this article let us admit the truth of the assumption—that the money is mainly contributed by the wicked trusts and expended in such rascally ways as the corruption of the press and the purchase of votes. But to what class of editors and voters will it naturally go? To Republicans? Surely Senator Hanna and his accomplices (bad men as I concede them to be) are not so foolish as to purchase what will come to them without price. The stupidity of knaves is hardly so hopeless and impenitent as that. When Senator Hanna seeks purchasable voters he will not go among voters whom he does not need to purchase, will he? If he bribes enough men to carry the presidential election, they will be mostly Democrats, will they not? Now I fancy all will admit that there is no moral difference between giving a bribe and accepting one. Even the law with its tendency (being usually the work of lawyers) to fine and fanciful discriminations makes no distinction between them, bribe-giving is a felony and bribe-taking is a felony—the briber and the bribed are impartially "in danger of hell fire." One is as great a scoundrel as the other.

Now, not many men are engaged in handling a campaign fund corruptly, and not many of its contributors have guilty knowledge of its use. If it required a million Republican rogues to buy the votes of a million Democratic rogues one might say the "honors" were "easy."

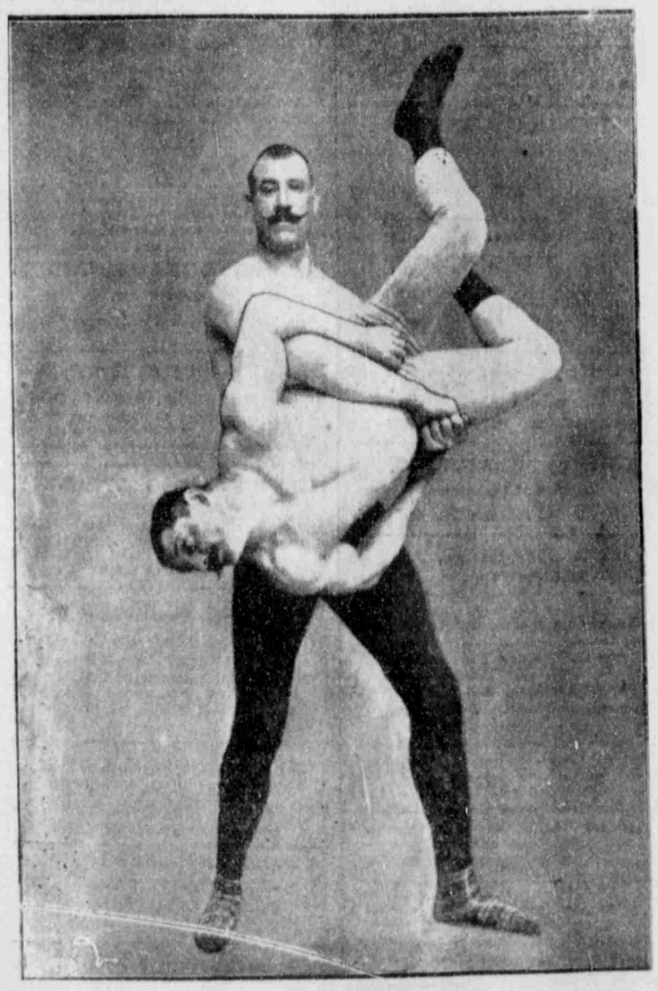
But that is not so; we all know that when votes of sovereign electors are purchased the sellers are many and the buyers few. What follows?

This follows: The severest indictment that one can draw against one's own party is to accuse the other party of having won an election by the corrupt use of money. There could be no corrupt use of money but for the prevalence of rascals in the party corrupted. Unless the Democratic party has many times as many rascals as the Republican party, no Democrat should express a fear of Mr. Hanna and his money bags, for every Democrat professes to think that it has an immense natural majority. Yet all the Democratic writers and speakers do fear, or loudly profess to fear, the Republican "corruption fund," and are apparently virtuously indignant against those who handle it; while they have not a word of disgust for the Democratic rascality which makes it profitable to do so.

That is what I do not comprehend—why in "dealing damnation round" upon the sons of political corruption the indignant patriot should so misplace the leaven of his wrath. I do not belong to any political party. If I did, and thought I had reason to fear its defeat by dishonesty of the money power, I hope that heaven would give me strength to execute the quickest "flop" on record.

WHAT PONS SAYS HE'LL DO TO ROEBER.

Sensational Pivot Throw With Which Europe's Champion Wins Most of His Spectacular Matches. Old World Wrestler Is Anxious to Meet All Comers.



Paul Pons, Champion Wrestler of Europe, says he'll handle Ernest Roeber and Beck Olsen just as he slings Hetzler, the Russian crack, in this thrilling photograph.